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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7887  
INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 6033  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0638  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7306  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0718  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 1220  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1782  
RHMFIASS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHMFIASS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR  
RHMFIASS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR

S E C R E T SEOUL 001622

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2015

TAGS: PREF PREL PHUM AMGT KS

SUBJECT: LOCAL UNHCR REQUESTS STOP TO NORTH KOREAN ASYLUM  
SEEKERS REFERRALS

REF: A. STATE 25824  
1B. 05 STATE 174716

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (U) Action Request: See paragraph 3.

¶2. (SBU) On May 12, the Acting Representative of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea, Michele Manca di Nissa, informed poloff that over the past week 3-5 ROK citizens, apparently resettled from North Korea, had approached UNHCR requesting asylum in the United States claiming that they suffered from oppression in South Korea. They also claimed that they were referred to UNHCR by the Embassy. Manca di Nissa said he was calling Canadian, U.S., and New Zealand Embassies to request that they desist from referring South Korean citizens to UNHCR because its mandate did not extend to the ROK, adding that "there was nothing UNHCR could do" for South Korean citizens in the ROK seeking asylum elsewhere. In light of media accounts of the USG having accepted North Koreans via Southeast Asia and a Los Angeles court granting protection to a former North Korean who had obtained ROK citizenship, he was concerned the number of North Koreans living in South Korea but seeking asylum elsewhere would increase.

¶3. (S) While we do not know the particulars of the recent incidents mentioned by UNHCR, Embassy procedure, per reftels, has been to refer walk-ins seeking asylum or refugee status to UNHCR. Embassy requests clarification whether we should continue to refer such cases to UNHCR.

MINTON